



California Standards Tests

Teacher Guide for the 2003 California Writing Standards Tests at Grades Four and Seven

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For More Information

For more information about the California Writing Standards Tests (CSTs in writing) or Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program, consult the California Department of Education (CDE) Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/resources.asp> (Internet) or contact the Standards and Assessment Division of the CDE at (916) 445-8765 (phone), at (916) 319-0969 (fax), or at STAR@cde.ca.gov (e-mail).



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Section I — Introduction



Introduction

In February 2000, the governor signed legislation to add writing assessments to the STAR California Standards Tests administered at the elementary and middle grade levels. These writing assessments, the CSTs in writing, were administered from 2001 through 2003 at grades four and seven.

The CSTs in writing address state writing application content standards for grades four and seven. At grade four, these standards require students to produce four types of writing: narratives, summaries, information reports, and responses to literature. At grade seven, they require students to produce five types of writing: narratives, persuasive essays, summaries, responses to literature, and research reports.

The CSTs in writing do not assess information reports at grade four and research reports at grade seven because these writing assignments require extended time for students to gather information and/or research topics before writing can begin. In addition, the narrative writing tested at grades four and seven does not include personal or autobiographical narrative. Writing that would invite personal disclosure is not tested in any genre on the CSTs in writing.

In addition to the CSTs in writing, the 2003 California English-Language Arts Standards Tests (CST in English-language arts) at grades four and seven contained 75 multiple-choice questions. Beyond 2003, the CSTs in English-language arts at grades four and seven will continue to include a CST in writing. The writing test at each of these grades may address any of the writing types identified as appropriate for testing at that grade level.

The *Teacher Guide for the 2003 California Writing Standards Tests at Grades Four and Seven* presents the tasks used on the 2003 CSTs in writing, along with sample student responses, teacher commentaries, and the holistic rubric used to score student responses. The *Teacher Guide for the California Writing Standards Tests at Grades Four and Seven*, released in May 2002, included the 2001 writing tasks with sample student responses and teacher commentaries, examples of all writing genres that may be tested at each grade, and student responses and teacher commentaries for those genres. The *Addendum to the May 2002 Teacher Guide for California Writing Standards Tests at Grades Four and Seven*, released in August 2003, included the grade four and seven writing tasks administered in 2002 along with sample student responses and teacher commentaries. This guide is designed to be used with the May 2002 and August 2003 documents.



Writing Tasks and Scoring Rubric

The 2003 California Writing Standards Test writing tasks at grade four are shown on pages II-2 and II-11 in Section II of this guide. The writing tasks at grade seven are shown on pages III-2 and III-13 in Section III. Students in schools, tracks, or programs in session on March 18, 2003, responded to the task administered on that date or on the makeup date, March 19. Students in schools, tracks, or programs not in session on March 18 responded to the task administered on May 13 or on the makeup date, May 14. Students had time to read the tasks and to plan, write, and proofread their essays.

Student responses to the writing tasks administered in 2003 were scored using a four-point holistic rubric, with four being the highest score. Two readers evaluated each response, and the student's reported score was the sum of these two ratings. If the two readers assigned scores that differed by more than one point, a third reader scored the response. The scoring rubric for grade four is shown on pages II-17 and II-18 in Section II, and the scoring rubric for grade seven is shown on pages III-26 and III-27 in Section III. Alternate format versions of the rubric for grade four are presented on pages II-19 through II-24 in Section II to indicate how all the scoring criteria were applied to student responses in each genre tested. Alternate format versions of the rubric for grade seven are presented on pages III-28 through III-35 in Section III.

In 2003, each student's result on the grade four or grade seven writing task was reported as a separate Writing Applications score that could range from 2 to 8. This score was combined with the student's multiple-choice score on the CST in English-language arts to determine the student's overall English-language arts performance level.

It is important to note that the four score points on the scoring rubric are not intended to correlate with the performance levels used to show overall student performance on the CST in English-language arts. A score of four given to a student response by one reader, for example, does not equate to the Advanced level on the CST performance-level scale, a three does not equate to the Proficient level, and so on. Nor does a student's overall Writing Applications score—the student's result on the CST in writing based on the sum of the two readers' scores—correlate to a CST performance level. An overall writing test score of 7 or 8, for example, does not indicate a performance level of Advanced, a score of 5 or 6 does not indicate a performance level of Proficient, and so on. A student can be said to have achieved at a particular performance level only when that student's performance-level result is based on results of the full CST in English-language arts (including the CST in writing).



Sample Student Responses and Teacher Commentaries

Sample student responses to the writing tasks administered at grades four and seven on March 18 and 19 are shown on pages II-4 through II-10 in Section II and on pages III-6 through III-12 in Section III. Accompanying these student responses are teacher commentaries that illustrate how criteria for each score point were applied during the scoring process. Sample student responses to the tasks administered on May 13 and 14 are shown on pages II-12 through II-16 in Section II and on III-18 through III-25 in Section III, along with teacher commentaries.

The sample responses, drawn from field tests and operational tests, illustrate student work at each score point. It should be remembered, however, that each essay represents only one example of student work at a particular score level. In reality, the range of student work within any of the four score points is broad. To teachers familiar with a six-point rubric, some sample responses that receive a four on a four-point scale may seem less qualified than responses that earn a six on a six-point scale. The four-point responses will include some pieces of student work that would fall into range below a six on a six-point scale. It also should be remembered that, within a given score point, responses will demonstrate differing combinations of strengths and weaknesses.

In 2003, narrative writing was tested at grade four, and response to literature writing was tested at grade seven. It should be noted, however, that since other genres may be tested at these grades, the types of writing students may be asked to produce can change annually.

Suggested Uses for This Teacher Guide

The writing prompts, sample student responses, and teacher commentaries in this guide are intended to illustrate how the scoring rubric was used to score student responses on the 2003 CST in writing at grades four and seven. Teachers also can use the information provided as guidance in applying the rubric to their students' writing. Students can familiarize themselves with state content standards addressed on the writing test by using the rubric to score other students' writing. These suggested activities can enable teachers and students to use rubric-based scoring as a diagnostic tool to help identify areas of strength and weakness in student writing.



The list below presents further suggestions for using the teacher guide to inform and improve the assessment and teaching of student writing.

Using the Teacher Guide for School District or School Assessments

Some suggestions for using the teacher guide to help improve school district or school assessments include but are not limited to:

- Use the contents of the writing guide to become familiar with the components of writing assessments (i.e., prompt, scoring rubric, student responses).
- Examine the released prompts to identify distinguishing elements of the different writing genres.
- Examine the scoring rubric to ascertain critical features of a holistic rubric.
- Analyze the sample student responses in conjunction with the teacher commentaries and criteria in the scoring rubrics to determine grade-level-specific writing expectations. This information can inform decisions about areas of focus for writing programs.

Using the Teacher Guide for Classroom Assessments

Some suggestions for using the teacher guide to help improve classroom assessments include but are not limited to:

- Use the writing prompts, sample student responses, teacher commentaries, and scoring rubrics to help teachers understand what is required by specific state content standards that are the focus of the writing tests.
- Use the writing prompts and scoring rubrics to help teachers understand the advantages and benefits of writing tests:
 - They engage students in a cognitively complex activity.
 - They give students an opportunity to create rather than select a response.
- Study the scoring rubrics to understand the criteria that should be used to assess writing.
- Encourage teachers to use the prompts, sample student responses, teacher commentaries, and scoring rubrics to help their students understand what is expected of them on the CST in writing.
- Use the writing prompts, sample student responses, teacher commentaries, and scoring rubrics to help teachers identify the knowledge and skills required by the writing tests. This information should become the focus of writing instruction.



- Compare the state writing prompts and scoring rubrics with those that accompany the existing curricular program. This information can help identify areas that need to be strengthened in writing programs. It could be determined, for example, that a particular writing program may not provide students enough opportunities to write in a particular genre. It could be determined that the characteristics of a writing genre in a particular curricular program do not align well with the characteristics of that genre as defined by the state content standards and the CST in writing.



Section II—Grade Four

Writing Tasks

Sample Student Work

Teacher Commentaries

Scoring Rubrics



Grade Four Narrative Writing Task

Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

The writing task below was administered to students who took the CST in writing at grade four on March 18 or 19, 2003. The prompt used for the May 13 and 14 administration is shown on page II-11 in this section. Sample student responses and teacher commentaries are included for both tasks.

Narrative Writing Task

Directions:

- In this writing test, you will write a story in response to the writing task on the following page.
- You will have time to plan, write, and proofread.
- Only what you write on the lined pages in this booklet will be scored.

Scoring:

Your writing will be scored on how well you:

- tell a story about an event or an experience;
- organize the story to have a beginning, a middle, and an end;
- use details to help the reader imagine the event or the experience; and
- use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Read the following writing task. You must write your story on this topic.

Writing the Story:

Imagine you are walking down the hall at your school, and you hear a strange noise coming from your classroom. When you go inside, you discover that the strange noise is coming from a funny-looking animal sitting at your desk. Write a story about what happens next.

Remember that your writing will be scored on how well you:

- tell a story about an event or an experience;
- organize the story to have a beginning, a middle, and an end;
- use details to help the reader imagine the event or the experience; and
- use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.



Narrative Task—Grade Four

Student responses to the narrative tasks on pages II-2 and II-11 in this section were scored using the Grade Four Scoring Rubric shown on pages II-17 and II-18 in this section. This rubric incorporates portions of the English-language arts Writing Strategies and Written Conventions content standards that address writing in general and includes criteria specific to narrative writing.

Standard

Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

- 2.1 Write narratives:
- Relate ideas, observations, or recollections of an event or experience.
 - Provide a context to enable the reader to imagine the world of the event or experience.
 - Use concrete sensory details.
 - Provide insight into why the selected event or experience is memorable.

Grade Four Focus

For the writing tasks at grade four, students were expected to tell a complete story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Students who did well incorporated concrete details, maintained a clear focus, and demonstrated a sound grasp of writing conventions. Effective narratives exhibited a range of strategies such as use of dialogue and descriptive detail.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work

The Revenge of the Monster

"Ooogabooga! Ooogabooga!" That strange noise seemed to be coming from the classroom. I went inside, but nothing was there. "Ooogabooga!" Then I saw it. At first, I saw nothing more than a brown speck of dirt. But when it talked (or screamed), you could see the inside of that huge mouth, and it wasn't pretty. I'm pretty sure that nobody would want to get too close to those purple fangs. Just as I turned around to leave, I realized something. It was sitting at my desk! If you are intelligent, you would realize that when I sat down for math, one more Ooogabooga and I was as good as gone. So let me tell you, during what I thought was my final recess, I was the most scared kid in the whole of Los Angeles.

It was 10:19 a.m. Only 1 more minute until monster math. Brrring! "There goes the bell," I thought. It may be a bell, but it certainly wasn't saving me. My heart felt like a drum as I walked down the hallway. It felt like a rockslide as I opened the classroom door. I almost had a heart attack as I walked to my desk. But wait! It wasn't there! Oh, I spoke too soon. There it is. Okay, Jessica, steady. Be calm. It lunged. I lunged. "Oooga . . ." I had flicked it onto the floor. I had defeated the monster! But wait! What was that rumbling noise? I turned around, just as the classroom seemed to fall away. Oh boy. It was the monster's mother. She had a thing that looked like mop sticking out of her head, and the rest of her body looked like meat that had gone bad. She smelled like it to. I didn't stick around to see the father. I ran and ran and ran. "Please let this be a dream," I thought.

"Jessica! Jessica!" I slowly opened my eyes. During those few seconds of blurred vision, I saw a mop. "Go away!" I pleaded. "Jessica Parker! I am your mother and you are going to be late for school!" No monster ever talked like that in all the horror movies I've seen.

"Mom!" I groaned. I quickly opened my eyes again and confirmed that it was just a dream. "Yippee!" I jumped out of bed and ran up and down the staircase five times. My mother stared at me, dumbfounded. "Whatever," she muttered to herself. By the time she made it to the kitchen, I was on my way to school. I skipped into the classroom happy as can be. Then I heard it. "Ooogabooga!" I fainted.

Commentary

This essay clearly addresses all parts of the task. The essay has a clear beginning, middle, and end—an opening where the narrator first hears and sees the creature, a middle that describes the narrator's experience with the creature and its mother, and an ending where the narrator is at first relieved but then realizes the creature is not imaginary.

The clear organization and the writer's use of vivid sensory detail to describe sound ("Ooogabooga"; "Brrring!"), sight ("you could see the inside of that huge mouth"), smell (the mother looked and smelled "like meat that had gone bad"), and the narrator's feelings ("[my heart] felt like a rockslide") demonstrate a clear understanding of purpose and help the reader visualize the narrator's experience.

Although the essay's structure is clear, a shift in point of view and lack of transitional material in one spot weaken overall coherence. In the first paragraph, the point of view switches from "I" to "you" to "I," and it is unclear how the narrator gets from her classroom in the first paragraph to her location down the hall at the beginning of the second paragraph. These flaws, however, detract only minimally from the essay's overall quality.

The writer conveys the central idea that the narrator is afraid of the creature and illustrates this idea by describing the narrator's pounding heart, the creature's lunge and the narrator's frantic escape, the narrator's relief when she thinks it's a dream, and her collapse when she realizes it isn't. The title of the story even suggests the ending by foreshadowing the creature's return.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 4 Essay (continued)

Commentary

A mixture of simple, complex, and compound sentences moves the paragraphs along quickly. The first paragraph, for instance, contains a mixture of short ("Then I saw it") and more leisurely sentences ("So let me tell you, during what I thought was my final recess, I was the most scared kid in the whole of Los Angeles"). In the middle paragraph, short sentences illustrate the quick shifts in the writer's thoughts and the sudden action ("But wait! It wasn't there! Oh, I spoke too soon. There it is. Okay. Jessica, steady. Be calm. It lunged. I lunged").

Conventions, especially quotation marks and exclamation points, are used well, particularly for a fourth grader writing within a limited time. In places, verb tense is incorrect. In the second paragraph, for example, the writer says, "I spoke too soon" rather than "I had spoken," and the writer refers to "all the horror movies I've seen" rather than "...I had seen" in the third paragraph. These lapses are rare, however, and do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

With the writer's use of vivid sensory detail and varied sentence types to capture the reader's interest, this essay represents a particularly sophisticated effort for a fourth-grade writer. It illustrates writing in the upper range of score point four papers.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work

I was walking down the hall at my school. I heard a strange noise coming from my classroom. When I went inside, there was a funny-looking animal sitting at my desk. The animal looked at me. He was touching my stuff. I shouted, "Why are you touching my stuff!" I was trying to catch it, but I couldn't. He ran as fast as he could and didn't stop. I was too tired to run, so I opened the door and said, "Can somebody help me! There's a funny-looking animal in my classroom!" But there was no answer.

I sat on my desk and thought about it for a while. The animal was silent. He was sitting on the roundtable, trying to eat 30 cupcakes at once. He seemed very happy. I was very surprised, he ate 30 cupcakes! I walked down the hall quietly leaving the funny-looking animal in my classroom. I went to the office and said all the things that happened in the classroom. Mrs. Loomis was very surprised. Mrs. Loomis ran to the room quietly without any noise. She opened the door quietly and saw a strange, funny-looking animal looking for something. "What is he looking for?" asked Mrs. Loomis in a surprised voice. "I think he's looking for some food." I answered.

He found a package of M & M and started eating. After he ate them, he started licking the bag. then, I noticed that he was very hungry. I took out an oreo cookie from my lunch box and showed it to the animal. He looked at it happily. Then I open the door and threw it high and far from this school, Alder Park. Then the animal ran where it went, tring to catch it. I was proud of myself for getting the funny-looking animal out of my school.

Commentary

This essay addresses all parts of the writing task. It tells a story about an imaginary event and provides a beginning, middle, and end. The writer's use of descriptive language to help the reader visualize the event demonstrates an understanding of purpose. Description is most effective in specific references to the creature's food: the 30 cupcakes, the brand names "M & M" and "oreo," and the creature "licking the [M & M] bag." The essay is enlivened by dialogue as well ("Why are you touching my stuff!" "Can somebody help me!"). On the other hand, the writer is vague in describing the "funny-looking animal" and the "stuff" on the narrator's desk, and in failing to identify Mrs. Loomis. The ending is also limited to a single, final sentence.

The writer provides a consistent focus, in part, by confining the encounter with the creature to a short time period. The writer achieves a tight organizational structure by ensuring that the essay's incidents (e.g., the narrator frantically questioning and chasing the animal in paragraph one, running to Mrs. Loomis' office in paragraph two, using the Oreo to trick the creature in the final paragraph) are focused on and help convey the central idea (the narrator's determination to remove the creature).

The essay contains some variety in sentence types. These include complex sentences that begin with a subordinate clause ("After he ate them, he started licking the bag") or end with a modifying phrase ("I walked down the hall quietly leaving the funny-looking animal in my classroom"), sentences with compound verbs ("She opened the door quietly and saw a strange, funny-looking animal looking for something"), a compound sentence ("I was trying to catch it, but I couldn't"), and simple sentences. Most sentences, however, begin



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 3 Essay (continued)

Commentary

subject-verb, making the essay somewhat repetitive stylistically.

The essay contains some errors in the conventions of English. In the first paragraph, for example, the narrator shouts two questions, both of which lack question marks. The second paragraph contains a comma splice ("I was very surprised, he ate 30 cupcakes") and one awkward word choice ("I went to the office and said [rather than 'told' or 'described'] all the things that happened in the classroom"), and the third paragraph lacks capitals in places ("then, I noticed that he was very hungry"; "oreo cookie"). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point three.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work

I turned on the light and it was humungus. One of the hamsters got out of its cage. I wanted to get a teacher but if I ran and one of the boys bump into me, and ask what I'm doing. That would be inberising. So all I had to do is pick up the old ugly dirty rat and put it in its cage.

Then when I was walking home I felt something moving in my back-pack. hahaha. It was the hamster. Then the hamster got scared, jumped down, out of my back-pack and hurt his leg. I felt really bad. Well, I guess I'm going to take you home and fix you up. Mrs. Wilson won't mind. You will be better in no time. Then when I got home I fed the poor thing some crackers. Then it stood there for hours and hours. It wouldn't stop crying. The next day, which was saterday all day I tried to make the hamsters leg feel better. But it still kept crying. Tic-Toc Tic-Toc. The clock went by, 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock. Then suddenly I woke up. I guess I fell asleep. Then I got on my bike, put the hamster in my pack and headed for the store to go get medicin for the poor thing.

When I was back I gave the hamster some medicin. Then he fell right asleep. An hour later, I heard him eating. I looked at him and he was better. I can tell because he was smiling. And he wasn't eating the whole time he was sick. But he was now.

Monday morning for school I brought the hamster back and my teacher said, "Oh what happend did you steel him. I told her "Its a long story." Then when I went to school the next day know one would stop asking me questions. I just walked away. Then my teacher said since we have two hamsters, and you saved his life, you can take him home I said "thank you." Then that day when I was walking home from school, I said to the hamster, "I'm going to call you George. George and I went to the fair, circus, Disneyland, roller skating, and biking.

Then 2 years later George died. I and my friends made him a grave we all said a little prayer and set flowers beside George.

Know I am 34 still thinking about George. He and I were really good friends. Know I pass this story to my grandchildren. And I bet they will pass it on to there children, and there grandchildren, and there children. George is passed down generatoin to generatoin.

Commentary

This essay demonstrates some understanding of purpose—it tells a story about an experience and it attempts to incorporate details. The organization, however, is inconsistent. Although the essay has a well-developed middle, the writer begins by plunging into the narrative without attempting to orient the reader, and the concluding paragraph is illogical and abrupt.

The essay's organizational structure is inconsistent in other ways as well. In the second paragraph, for example, the writer does not explain how the hamster got from the cage into the narrator's backpack. In the third paragraph, the writer first explains that the creature was finally eating, then that he had not eaten earlier, then again that he was eating. Point of view becomes illogical in the final paragraph where the narrator has died but continues to think about the hamster.

A central idea—that the narrator grew to love the hamster—is conveyed effectively, despite various flaws in structure and conventions that make the essay a bumpy read.

Although the writer uses concrete detail, it is sometimes extraneous. For example, the writer describes the ticking of a clock, which apparently puts the narrator to sleep, but this description does little to support the thesis or advance the narrative. Similarly, although Mrs. Wilson tells an amusing anecdote about the hamster and her husband's shoe, the anecdote doesn't clearly relate to the narrator's hamster. In other places, the detail is too limited. In explaining that the hamster's story would be passed down the generations, for example, the writer seems to imply how much the hamster meant to the narrator. This suggestion, however, is not conveyed clearly. Similarly, the narrator seems relieved to hear that hamsters live four years, but why the narrator is relieved is unclear.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 2 Essay (continued)

Student Work

Then that next day when I went to work, I told all the people who worked with me about George. Then when I was on my way home I just remembered. I went to go see Mrs. Wilson. She was 64 years old she told me about the other hamster and how it died. Then suddenly I said so hamsters only live for 4 years. yup. Oh, "I said smiling. I bet you miss flower." She said, well my husband din't like flower. She would always cuddle in his she and when he got back from work and he took his shoes off his feet would smell like hamster.

Then when I was driving home I got in a car accident. I died a year later. And steal thought about George.

The end

Commentary

Sentences are typically simple and short. The essay includes some complex and compound sentences, but the benefits of sentence variation are undercut by poor sentence construction. Problems include sentence fragments ("I wanted to get a teacher but if I ran and one of the boys bump into me, and ask what I'm doing. That would be imberising"), run-on sentences ("Then my teacher said since we have two hamsters, and you saved his life, you can take him home I said 'thank you'"), sentences in which commas are misplaced ("Then the hamster got scared, jumped down, out of my backpack and hurt his leg"), and numerous sentences that begin with "Then" or "And."

The essay contains many errors in conventions, especially misspellings ("know" instead of "now"; "smilling" instead of "smiling"), improper capitalization ("saterday," "Tic-Toc Tic-Toc"), incorrect verb tense ("One of the hamsters got out of its cage" instead of "had got out"; "I guess I fell asleep" instead of "had fallen asleep"), and incorrect verb form ("I can tell because he was smiling" instead of "I could tell"). Although errors in conventions are numerous, most do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point two.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work

the animal mite make me laugh because he said something funny to me and made a funny face at me. If the hears me she would be mad at me; Next if it was recess time i would play with him at recess. Then I would not play with him because he has to go back to the zoo again, but I wish he could of stayed with and my friends.

Commentary

The writer demonstrates little understanding of purpose. The writer attempts to narrate a sequence of events, using transitions such as “Next” and “Then,” but the narrative seems to describe possibilities rather than actualities because many of the verb forms indicate possibility (“i would play with him”; “Then I would not play with him...”) rather than definitiveness.

Other than an attempt to sequence the narration, there is no sense of organization or focus. Verbs switch randomly—from conveying possibility (“the animal mite make me laugh”) to describing present reality (“he has to go back to the zoo again”), to suggesting that the creature has already left (“but I wish he could of stayed with and my friends”). The narrative is too short to possess an organizational structure. Rather, the piece starts abruptly, relates a brief series of random events without context, and ends abruptly.

The narrative contains no descriptive language or sensory detail to help readers visualize the creature, hear its funny comment and see its “funny face,” or watch it play with the narrator at recess.

There is no central idea.

The narrative contains serious errors in conventions. The narrative lacks a capital “T,” for example, at the beginning of the first sentence, uses a lowercase “i” in the second sentence, and capitalizes “Next” immediately following a semicolon. It contains errors in verb form (“could of” instead of “could have”; “if it was recess time” rather than “if it were”). Referents for nearly all the pronouns are unclear, and words are omitted that might help clarify references (“If the hears me she would be mad at me”). These errors—particularly the lack of clear references—interfere with the reader’s understanding.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point one.



Grade Four Narrative Writing Task

Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

The writing task below was administered to students who took the CST in writing at grade four on May 13 or 14, 2003. Sample student responses and teacher commentaries are presented on the pages following the task shown below.

Narrative Writing Task

Directions:

- In this writing test, you will write a story in response to the writing task on the following page.
- You will have time to plan, write, and proofread.
- Only what you write on the lined pages in this booklet will be scored.

Scoring:

Your writing will be scored on how well you:

- tell a story about an event or an experience;
- organize the story to have a beginning, a middle, and an end;
- use details to help the reader imagine the event or the experience; and
- use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Read the following writing task. You must write your story on this topic.

Writing the Story:

If you could be the teacher of your class for one day, what would you do and why?

Write a story about what would happen in your class the day that you are the teacher.

Remember that your writing will be scored on how well you:

- tell a story about an event or an experience;
- organize the story to have a beginning, a middle, and an end;
- use details to help the reader imagine the event or the experience; and
- use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work

"What?" I screeched. I had just received a call from the superintendent that he wanted me to teach a class! He said he thought I could handle it. "As a substitute, right?" I asked, regaining my composure. "No, as a real teacher," the jolly, worry-free voice boomed from his office, miles away from my house and McGilvra. "Do I have any time to plan?" I questioned, praying it wouldn't be what I suspected it was. "I was actually hoping you'd be able today," he pleaded, starting to sound stressed and worried. "I guess," I began. "Great!" he cried, hanging up the phone. I groaned. I was now faced with the gruesome task of teaching my fellow classmates. When I got to school, I took roll and began Success for All. Suddenly I found myself in my room. I was no longer the teacher, and it was 7:07 on a Saturday morning. Oh, well. I decided to finish the dream as a daydream.

First I'd have explained several literary devices, like personification, which is giving an inanimate object or an animal human characteristics. I would have given examples of puns and cause and effect and told them that similes are comparisons that use like or as and metaphors don't. I then would have them read a book like Walk Two Moons, or Where the Red Fern Grows. They would have answered Treasure Hunt questions 1-4 on what the students previously read. In my daydream I called on a kid with sandy colored hair and eyes that were bright like a cat's for accelerated reading suggestions. I would teach them the literary devices in bunches so that when devices week came up they would know something about it.

Next would come writing. I'd have people pair themselves up and write a few paragraphs on topics they wanted to write on. Then I'd break the class up into teams and have two teams debate on each topic in front of the class. The kids in the class would vote on which team won the debate on each topic. I'd do this activity to make them think on their feet, write a lot out of a little, and have fun.

After lunch we'd start in on math. The class would jump into long division. I'd teach them the basic steps and then throw tips at them, left and right, like "D"= Dad and divide, "M"= Mom and multiply, "S"= sister and subtract, "B"= brother and bring down, "R"= rover and remainder, and "C"=cousin and check. The kids pretty much grasped the concept (in the dream) except for a boy named Luke, a girl named Michelle, and red-headed Nick. I'd do division, because it is vital to so many other operations.

Commentary

This essay clearly addresses all parts of the writing task. It tells a story about what the writer would do as teacher for a day and what would happen in the writer's class. It has a clear beginning, middle, and end, including an introduction that explains how the narrator became the teacher, a middle that describes what the class did, and an ending that expresses what the writer learned.

The essay demonstrates a clear understanding of purpose by describing the teaching experience in vivid descriptive language. Description is liveliest in the introduction ("What?" I screeched. I had just received a call from the superintendent that he wanted me to teach a class! He said he thought I could handle it. 'As a substitute, right?' I asked, regaining my composure. 'No, as a real teacher,' the jolly, worry-free voice boomed from his office, miles away from my house and McGilvra"), but it is present in the middle paragraphs as well ("I then would have them read a book like Walk Two Moons or Where the Red Fern Grows.... I called on a kid with sandy colored hair and eyes that were bright like a cat's for accelerated reading suggestions").

The writer maintains a consistent focus by concentrating throughout the essay on a description of academic activities. Even physical education becomes a spelling lesson. The writer clearly delineates each class activity by devoting a separate paragraph to each.

The essay contains a clear central idea that is explained in the final paragraph ("I would enjoy my day as a teacher and I appreciate what they do. It's not easy") and that is illustrated by the lessons the narrator devises to make the day interesting for the class.

The essay contains a variety of sentence types. These include a combination of complex and



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 4 Essay (continued)

Student Work

When the time for science came, around 1:30 P.M. the kids would do a Hidden Message Word Search and the hidden message would be questions on the ecosystem. I'd do this to make taking a test less nerve-racking.

Finally, for spelling and P.E. together I'd pick teams of three. One person would call out the spelling words every time your partner would pass the ball and you would have to spell the word. I would do this so that the kids would learn to spell and have fun playing a physical activity at the same time. Kids that were too rowdy would have to write the words instead.

I would enjoy my day as a teacher and I appreciate what they do. It's not easy. It takes lots of planning and attention to make sure the kids learn from the lessons. I must end my dream here, to eat breakfast.

Commentary

compound sentences and effective use of transitions and parallelism ("Next would come writing. I'd have people pair themselves up and write a few paragraphs on topics they wanted to write on. Then I'd break the class up into teams and have two teams debate on each topic in front of the class.... I'd do this activity to make them think on their feet, write a lot out of a little, and have fun").

The essay contains few errors in conventions. The writer punctuates quotations well and spells correctly. In places, however, verb tenses change without reason ("I would have given examples of puns and cause and effect and told them that similes are comparisons that use like or as and metaphors don't"), and at one point pronouns switch from "them" to a vague "you" ("One person would call out the spelling words every time your partner would pass the ball and you would have to spell the word"). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point four.

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work

I'm a Teacher

I woke up on a Monday morning when I remembered it was my first day of teaching. I took a shower, got dressed, and ate breakfast. I found out two weeks before that I'd be testing my class today. I wondered how the kids would like me. This was the most important day of my life.

When I arrived at school, I went to my room. It looked even bigger and brighter than ever before. Since I didn't know if all the kids knew me yet, I wrote my name on the board, Ms. Hillerman. When the children arrived, I counted eight boys and twelve girls.

Commentary

This essay addresses all parts of the writing task. It narrates an experience and has a beginning, middle, and end. It includes some descriptive language (The children in the narrator's class are taking gymnastics, dance, and ice skating; the narrator brings home a big stack of papers) and sensory detail (The kids' "eyes sparkled and their faces were lit up") to help readers visualize the experience.

Events are adequately but not thoroughly developed. Since activities outlined in the fourth paragraph are central to the narrator's teaching experience, the story would be significantly improved with further description



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 3 Essay (continued)

Student Work

Their eyes sparkled and their faces were lit up. I knew this was going to be a very fun day.

The children went right to their seats, just like good kids would do. When they were all seated, I inerduced myself. I told them my name was Ms. Hillerman and that I had two dogs and one cat. Then, I asked them to say their name and something special about them, so they did. Some people were in gymnastics and some were in dance, but one girl was in ice scating. That surprised me. This was going to be an interesting group of kids.

The first subject we worked on was math. We did addition and a little of subtraction. The class was even better than I had dreamed about. They did the problems they were assigned without complaning. They didn't talk the whole day unless the were spoken to or if they were at recess. For the rest of the school day all I thought about was my great class.

When I got home I had a pretty big stack of papers, but I couldn't wait to give out grades. After, all my work was done I got ready for bed. I had all ready eaten dinner with my friends and had told them about my marvalous day. I knew when I went to bed, I was the luckiest person in the world!

Commentary

and sensory detail to illustrate how the math lesson progressed, how compliant the children were, and so on.

The essay maintains a consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, with appropriate paragraphing throughout. The essay communicates a central idea (that the narrator's teaching experience was rewarding), and nearly all the information in the paper contributes to that idea.

A mixture of simple, complex, and compound sentences enables the essay to move along well ("When they were all seated. I inerduced myself. I told them my name was Ms. Hillerman and that I had two dogs and one cat. Then, I asked them to say their name and something special about them, so they did. Some people were in gymnastics and some were in dance, but one girl was in ice scating. That surprised me. This was going to be an interesting group of kids").

The essay contains errors in conventions. These include occasional errors in verb tense ("I found out two weeks before..." rather than "I *had* found"; "I wondered what my kids were like" rather than "*would be* like") and spelling errors ("inerduced"; "marvalous"). The errors in conventions do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point three.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work

The day I was a Teacher I told the class to do a test just like this and they had an hour to do it. After that was done we went outside to do a sport. Many of the kids voted for soccer so, we did soccer. When that was over we went in for an activity, and we did Artist Panting and Science. Then it was resese, and I corrected papers. When everyone was sent back in we did a reading test and an hour long math test. After that it was lunch and I went to the teachers launge, and corrected papers, again. Then when that was finish we went to an assembly and then went home. That was my day as a teacher.

Commentary

This essay addresses only parts of the writing task. It narrates a sequence of events on a very general level. It has a minimally developed middle and lacks a real introduction or conclusion. Although the essay does not contain descriptive language or sensory detail that might enable the reader to visualize events, it does make minimal use of concrete nouns—"soccer" and "Artist Panting and Science." The lack of development, of descriptive language, of sensory detail, and of a story (other than the barest recitation of events) indicates that the writer has little understanding of purpose.

The essay's focus and point of view are consistent, but development is so minimal that there is little opportunity for the focus to drift. Because the essay is merely a general listing of events, there is no organizational structure other than sequencing. Because the essay is seriously underdeveloped, there is little need for paragraph differentiation. The essay lacks a central idea.

Sentences are mostly complex and compound, but these are typically written in an awkward style.

The essay contains several errors in conventions—"Teacher," for example, is capitalized within a sentence, "teachers" in sentence seven lacks an apostrophe to indicate the possessive, "resese" (rather than "recess") and "launge" (rather than "lounge") are among the words misspelled, and the comma in the third sentence mistakenly appears after rather than before the conjunction. Although these errors may not interfere with the reader's understanding, the writer's failure to make clear what "this" refers to in the first sentence ("...I told the class to do a test just like this...") does interfere.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point two.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Four Narrative Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work

I'm going to tell you about my first day being a Teacher. First thing in the morning I got rert to go to the school to be the nert teacher. Next I got to the classroom I see one student. Then I send with are the other student the student sied ther are no more. Finally some more student "came and came and came" and ther a rend 55 student. Now know about First day being the nert Teacher

Commentary

This essay demonstrates little sense of purpose. It does contain an introductory sentence, a concluding sentence, and material in the middle, but it fails to relate a sequence of events because it ends once the students arrive in class. There is no indication of what the narrator or class did that day. The essay contains no concrete, descriptive language (except, perhaps, the reference to the "55" students) or sensory details to help the reader visualize events.

The introductory and concluding sentences suggest a rudimentary attempt at organization, but there is no real structure. The narrative is presented consistently from the first person point of view; however, since there is no central idea, the narrative has no focus.

The sentences in the middle of the narrative begin with transitions ("Next," "Then," "Finally") that, though somewhat plodding, move the reader along. The sentences themselves, however, are poorly structured and sometimes incomprehensible. Two of them are run-ons ("Next I got to the classroom I see one student. Then I send with are the other student the student sied ther are no more").

The essay contains many errors in conventions. There are serious spelling errors, for example, in the second sentence ("rert" apparently means "ready" and "nert" apparently means "new"), in the fourth sentence ("sied" instead of "saw," "sees," or "said," and "ther" instead of "there"), and in the fifth sentence ("a rend" apparently means "around"). The fifth sentence contains extraneous quotation marks ("came and came and came"). In at least two instances, "student" requires an "s" to make it plural. "Teacher" is capitalized twice unnecessarily. A period is missing after the final sentence. Conventions errors interfere with the reader's understanding.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point one.



Grade Four Scoring Rubric

The scoring rubric shown below is used to assign scores to students' written responses on the grade four writing tests. This rubric includes two sets of criteria. The criteria under "The writing" are adapted from the English-language arts Writing Strategies and Written Conventions of English content standards. These criteria are used to evaluate written responses in all genres for their clarity of purpose, central ideas, and organization and for their use of supporting evidence, sentence variety, and writing conventions. The criteria under "Narrative writing," "Summary writing," and "Response to literature writing," adapted from the grade four Writing Applications content standards for these genres, are used to evaluate student writing in the specific genres to which they apply.

On pages II-19 through II-24 in this section, alternate format versions of the grade four rubric are presented to indicate how all the scoring criteria are applied to student responses in each genre.

4 The writing—

- Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task.
- Demonstrates a *clear* understanding of purpose.
- Maintains a *consistent* point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including paragraphing when appropriate.
- Includes a *clearly presented* central idea with *relevant* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes a *variety* of sentence types.
- Contains *few, if any, errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do **not** interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Narrative writing—

- Provides a *thoroughly developed* sequence of *significant* events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories.
- Includes *vivid* descriptive language and sensory details that enable the reader to visualize the events or experiences.

Summary writing—

- Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and *significant* details.

Response to literature writing—

- Demonstrates a *clear* understanding of the literary work.
- Provides *effective* support for judgments through *specific* references to text and prior knowledge.

3 The writing—

- Addresses all parts of the writing task.
- Demonstrates a *general* understanding of purpose.
- Maintains a *mostly consistent* point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including paragraphing when appropriate.
- Presents a central idea with *mostly* relevant facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes a *variety* of sentence types.
- Contains *some errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do **not** interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Narrative writing—

- Provides an *adequately developed* sequence of significant events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories.
- Includes *some* descriptive language and sensory details that enable the reader to visualize the events or experiences.

Summary writing—

- Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and *significant* details.

Response to literature writing—

- Demonstrates an understanding of the literary work.
- Provides *some* support for judgments through references to text and prior knowledge.

**2 The writing—**

- Addresses *only parts* of the writing task.
- Demonstrates *little* understanding of purpose.
- Maintains an *inconsistent* point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure.
- *Suggests* a central idea with *limited* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes *little* variety in sentence types.
- Contains *several errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors **may** interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Narrative writing—

- Provides a *minimally developed* sequence of events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories.
- Includes *limited* descriptive language and sensory details that enable the reader to visualize the events or experiences.

Summary writing—

- Is characterized by *substantial* copying of key phrases and *minimal* paraphrasing.

Response to literature writing—

- Demonstrates a *limited* understanding of the literary work.
- Provides *weak* support for judgments.

1 The writing—

- Addresses *only one part* of the writing task.
- Demonstrates *no* understanding of purpose.
- *Lacks* a clear point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure.
- *Lacks* a central idea but may contain *marginally related* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes *no* sentence variety.
- Contains *serious errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Narrative writing—

- *Lacks* a sequence of events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories.
- *Lacks* descriptive language and sensory details that enable the reader to visualize the events or experiences.

Summary writing—

- Is characterized by substantial copying of *indiscriminately selected* phrases or sentences.

Response to literature writing—

- Demonstrates little understanding of the literary work.
- *Fails* to provide support for judgments.



Alternate Format Versions of the Grade Four Scoring Rubric

In the following charts, the grade four scoring rubric is presented in an alternate format to indicate how all the scoring criteria in the rubric—those derived from the Writing Strategies and Written Conventions standards as well as those derived from the Writing Applications standards—are applied to student responses in each genre.

The column under “Genre” contains the scoring criteria derived from the grade four Writing Applications standards. The column under “Organization and Focus” contains scoring criteria derived from the subset of Organization and Focus standards within the grade four Writing Strategies standards. The column under “Sentence Structure” contains the scoring criterion derived from the subset of Sentence Structure standards within the grade four Written and Oral English Language Conventions standards. The column under “Conventions” contains the scoring criteria derived from the subsets of Grammar, Punctuation, Capitalization, and Spelling standards within the grade four Written and Oral English Language Conventions standards. Although some columns contain more bullets than others, this is not meant to imply that columns with more bullets are more important in the scoring than those with fewer. References to the writing standards from which each scoring criterion is derived are presented in coded form following each criterion for score point four.

Grade Four Writing Rubric: Narrative Writing

Genre	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Provides a thoroughly developed sequence of significant events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories. (WA 2.1 a, d)■ Includes vivid descriptive language and sensory details that enable the reader to visualize the events or experiences. (WA 2.1 b, c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task.*■ Demonstrates a clear understanding of purpose. (WS 1.1)■ Maintains a consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including paragraphing when appropriate. (WS 1.1; 1.2 a, c, e; 1.3)■ Includes a clearly presented central idea with relevant facts, details, and/or explanations. (WS 1.2 b, c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes a variety of sentence types. (WC 1.1; 1.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains few, if any, errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing. (WC 1.3–1.7)
3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Provides an adequately developed sequence of significant events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories.■ Includes some descriptive language and sensory details that enable the reader to visualize the events or experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses all parts of the writing task.■ Demonstrates a general understanding of purpose.■ Maintains a mostly consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including paragraphing when appropriate.■ Presents a central idea with mostly relevant facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes a variety of sentence types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains some errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing.

* Since this criterion addresses requirements of the writing test rather than a content standard, it does not include a standards reference.

WA: Writing Applications standards

WS: Writing Strategies standards

WC: Written Conventions standards



Genre	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Provides a minimally developed sequence of significant events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories.■ Includes limited descriptive language and sensory details that enable the reader to visualize the events or experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses only parts of the writing task.■ Demonstrates little understanding of purpose.■ Maintains an inconsistent point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure.■ Suggests a central idea with limited facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes little variety in sentence types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains several errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Lacks a sequence of events to relate ideas, observations, and/or memories.■ Lacks descriptive language and sensory details that enable the reader to visualize the events or experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses only one part of the writing task.■ Demonstrates no understanding of purpose.■ Lacks a clear point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure.■ Lacks a central idea but may contain marginally related facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes no sentence variety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.



Grade Four Writing Rubric: Summary Writing

	Genre	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
4	■ Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and significant details. (WA 2.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task.*■ Demonstrates a clear understanding of purpose. (WS 1.1)■ Maintains a consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including paragraphing when appropriate. (WS 1.1, 1.2 a, c, e; 1.3)■ Includes a clearly presented central idea with relevant facts, details, and/or explanations. (WS 1.2 b, c)	■ Includes a variety of sentence types. (WC 1.1; 1.2)	■ Contains few, if any, errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing. (WC 1.3–1.7)
3	■ Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and significant details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses all parts of the writing task.■ Demonstrates a general understanding of purpose.■ Maintains a mostly consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including paragraphing when appropriate.■ Presents a central idea with mostly relevant facts, details, and/or explanations.	■ Includes a variety of sentence types.	■ Contains some errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
2	■ Is characterized by substantial copying of key phrases and minimal paraphrasing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses only parts of the writing task.■ Demonstrates little understanding of purpose.■ Maintains an inconsistent point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure.■ Suggests a central idea with limited facts, details, and/or explanations.	■ Includes little variety in sentence types.	■ Contains several errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

* Since this criterion addresses requirements of the writing test rather than a content standard, it does not include a standards reference.

WA: Writing Applications standards

WS: Writing Strategies standards

WC: Written Conventions standards



<i>Genre</i>	<i>Organization and Focus</i>	<i>Sentence Structure</i>	<i>Conventions</i>
1 ■ Is characterized by substantial copying of indiscriminately selected phrases or sentences.	■ Addresses only one part of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates no understanding of purpose. ■ Lacks a clear point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure. ■ Lacks a central idea but may contain marginally related facts, details, and/or explanations.	■ Includes no sentence variety.	■ Contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.



Grade Four Writing Rubric: Response to Literature Writing

	Genre	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Demonstrates a clear understanding of the literary work. (WA 2.2 a)■ Provides effective support for judgments through specific references to text and prior knowledge. (WA 2.2 b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task.*■ Demonstrates a clear understanding of purpose. (WS 1.1)■ Maintains a consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including paragraphing when appropriate. (WS 1.1; 1.2 a, c, e; 1.3)■ Includes a clearly presented central idea with relevant facts, details, and/or explanations. (WS 1.2 b, c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes a variety of sentence types. (WC 1.1; 1.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains few, if any, errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing. (WC 1.3–1.7)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Demonstrates an understanding of the literary work.■ Provides some support for judgments through references to text and prior knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses all parts of the writing task.■ Demonstrates a general understanding of purpose.■ Maintains a mostly consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including paragraphing when appropriate.■ Presents a central idea with mostly relevant facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes a variety of sentence types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains some errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Demonstrates a limited understanding of the literary work.■ Provides weak support for judgments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses only parts of the writing task.■ Demonstrates little understanding of purpose.■ Maintains an inconsistent point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure.■ Suggests a central idea with limited facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes little variety in sentence types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains several errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

* Since this criterion addresses requirements of the writing test rather than a content standard, it does not include a standards reference.

WA: Writing Applications standards

WS: Writing Strategies standards

WC: Written Conventions standards



	Genre	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Demonstrates little understanding of the literary work.■ Fails to provide support for judgments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses only one part of the writing task.■ Demonstrates no understanding of purpose.■ Lacks a clear point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure.■ Lacks a central idea but may contain marginally related facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes no sentence variety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.



Section III—Grade Seven

Writing Tasks

Sample Student Work

Teacher Commentaries

Scoring Rubrics



Grade Seven Response to Literature Writing Task

Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

The writing task below was administered to students in grade seven who took the California Writing Standards Test on March 18 or 19, 2003. The prompt used for the May 13 and 14 administration is shown on pages III-13 through II-17 in this section. Sample student responses and teacher commentaries are included for both tasks.

Response to Literature Writing Task

Directions:

- Read the story that begins on the following page.
- As you read, you may mark the story or make notes.
- After reading the story, you will be given directions to write an essay. You will have time to read, plan, write, and proofread.
- You may reread or go back to the story at any time during the assessment.
- Only what you write on the lined pages in this booklet will be scored.

Scoring:

Your writing will be scored on how well you write an essay that:

- shows your understanding of the author's message and your insight into the characters and ideas presented in the story;
- is organized around several clear ideas and/or images from the story;
- justifies your interpretation by giving examples and citing evidence from the text; and
- uses correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Read the Following Story:

The Alternate Speaker

On the way home from the speech competition, Daniel thought about his performance that day. Ordinarily he would be pleased to have placed fourth in the district competition; however, only the top three winners could advance to the regional competition. One of them would have to drop out in order for Daniel to compete. Daniel knew how hard all the contestants had worked to get ready for the district competition, so he thought the chances of anyone pulling out of the regionals were slim.



"How'd you do, Sport?" Daniel's father asked as soon as Daniel shut the door.

"Fourth," Daniel said, frustrated.

"Why the long face? What's so bad about placing fourth?" his mother asked.

"Fourth stinks," Daniel replied. "I'm the alternate. The only way I get to go to the regional competition is if someone else doesn't go. I might as well have not placed at all."

Daniel realized he sounded like a sore loser. While Daniel didn't mean to be ungrateful for his fourth-place win, he wanted desperately to go to the regional competition and then advance to the state contest.

Daniel was searching in the refrigerator for a snack when his sister walked in. "So what did you get, Big Mouth?" she asked Daniel, playfully brushing him aside to get a soda.

"Fourth," Daniel muttered as he kept rummaging.

The results surprised Sarah. Daniel had spent weeks preparing for the contest, often asking his family to sit through hours of his practicing in front of them in the living room. Daniel even practiced in the bathroom mirror while getting dressed for school each morning. The speech competition seemed to take over the life of the family for weeks.

"Talking is your talent. You never seem to shut up," his sister replied jokingly. "You'll do better next year," she added, trying to lighten the mood.

"Or he'll do better *this* year," Daniel's mother replied. "If someone does not go to the regional competition, Daniel will get to compete. It's not over just yet," she continued.

There was no encouraging Daniel, though. He grabbed an apple and some milk and headed for the living room. Gradually as the day wore on, Daniel sulked less, and by the end of the week, his fourth-place win was forgotten news. Daniel had given up any hope of competing at regionals.

Then the phone rang early that next Saturday morning. A few minutes later, Daniel heard a knock on his bedroom door.



"Daniel, wake up," his mother said quickly. Daniel wiped his eyes as he tried to focus on his mother's image at the door.

"Your speech teacher just called. Rebecca Peterson lost her voice cheering at last night's football game. She must have laryngitis. You'll have to go to the regional competition today in her place," his mother said.

Without another word, Daniel hustled to the bathroom to get ready. He splashed his face with cold water to wake himself up. He wanted to be alert and sharp since he felt that basically he had been given a second chance.

On the bus ride to the speech competition, Daniel thought about how disappointed Rebecca must be that she was not able to compete. Rebecca and Daniel were friends, and Daniel started to feel guilty about the complaining he had done about not advancing to the regionals. He promised himself that he would not be a sore loser if he didn't place this time. Still, Daniel struggled to ward off his nerves. There would be twice as many contestants in this regional competition as there were at the district level.

As the contest official handed out the speech topics, Daniel hoped he would like the topic. Daniel breathed a sigh of relief as he read the topic—"Your speech should address this idea: *Hope is powerful. Without it, you have nothing. With it, you can expect the unexpected to happen to you.*" Daniel smiled as his speech teacher's words rang in his ears: "If you want to give a good speech, you must speak from personal experience." Daniel knew exactly what he would say about the topic of expecting the unexpected to happen.

Daniel walked into the room, smiled at the judges, and then proceeded to speak personally and deliberately about the topic. A few hours later, he walked away with an award of fourth place.

Daniel smiled to himself as he rode home from the competition. He couldn't wait to tell his family about his fourth-place win. Although he would not wish laryngitis on anyone, Daniel knew that there just might be a chance that someone could not compete at the state competition. If that were to happen, Daniel would be ready to speak.

**Writing the Essay:**

Write an essay in which you present your understanding of the characters and the overall meaning of the story. Support your ideas with examples and/or evidence from the text.

Remember that your writing will be scored on how well you write an essay that:

- shows your understanding of the author's message and your insight into the characters and ideas presented in the story;
- is organized around several clear ideas and/or images from the story;
- justifies your interpretation by giving examples and citing evidence from the text; and
- uses correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Response to Literature Task—Grade Seven

Student responses to this response to literature task and to the task on pages III-13 through III-17 in this section were scored using the Grade Seven Scoring Rubric shown on pages III-26 and III-27 in this section. This rubric incorporates portions of the English-language arts writing strategies and written conventions content standards that address writing in general and includes criteria specific to response to literature writing.

Standard

Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

2.2 Write responses to literature:

- a. Develop interpretations exhibiting careful reading, understanding, and insight.
- b. Organize interpretations around several clear ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
- c. Justify interpretations through sustained use of examples and textual evidence.

Grade Seven Focus

For the writing tasks at grade seven, students were expected to show their understanding of a story by discussing what a character learns through the course of the story. The most effective essays presented sound interpretations of the story's meaning and characters; supported interpretations with quotations, examples, and explanations; and demonstrated strong control of sentence structure.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work

The short story "The Alternate Speaker" follows Daniel as he strives to place in the district competition for speech, and later, quite unexpectedly, the regional competition. Through these competitions Daniel learns perhaps the most important lesson in his life: the significance of hope.

After placing fourth in the district competition, Daniel is devastated, and begins to lose all hope for his chances of competing in regionals as well as for his friend Rebecca, who placed within the top three in the district competition. Instead of being proud of his outstanding accomplishment of placing fourth, Daniel decides to sulk, and give himself up to self-pity. Soon, Daniel loses all hope, and his spirit dies within him.

Unexpectedly, after Daniel's speech teacher calls his house, he is given a second chance due to Rebecca's lost voice. He feels guilty now, however, for he didn't want his friend to miss what she had been waiting for for so long. At this point in the story, Daniel's spirits are lifted, and hope flows through his body once again.

Daniel's speech subject, "Hope is powerful. Without it, you have nothing. With it, you can expect the unexpected to happen to you" ironically describes Daniel himself. When Daniel had no hope, he had nothing except for his moping self. After that fateful call, however, the unexpected came to him. In a way, the speech topic describes Daniel after the call, for after placing fourth in the regionals, Daniel was still full of hope and pride, expecting the unexpected.

Through two speech competitions, Daniel becomes a more mature boy. He is more mature in the way that now, after the competitions, he understands the significance and great power of hope. For the rest of his life, Daniel will always remember those days as a boy, when he learned something that will stick with him, and give him the power of hope forever.

Commentary

This essay clearly addresses all parts of the writing task. It presents a coherent interpretation of the meaning of the story—that with hope good things may happen unexpectedly and that by acknowledging the power of hope Daniel, the main character, grows in maturity. This is the essay's central idea. The writer even notes the less obvious point that Daniel had given up hope of competing again before receiving the invitation to participate in the regional competition. The writer's interpretation is supported with clear explanations and specific examples from the story.

The writer demonstrates a clear understanding of purpose and audience and a consistent focus by concentrating on how Daniel changes through the story and how the change in Daniel illustrates the story's theme.

The essay has a clear organization with a beginning that presents the essay's central idea, a middle that traces the changes in Daniel, and an ending that explains the significance of Daniel's transformation. The writer uses transitional words ("however") and other words that function as transitions ("Soon") effectively. The most effective transitions, however, are those that move the essay along by incorporating an idea from one sentence into the beginning of the next sentence ("The short story 'The Alternate Speaker' follows Daniel as he strives to place in the district competition for speech, and later, quite unexpectedly, the regional competition. Through these competitions Daniel learns perhaps the most important lesson...").

The essay moves along smoothly with a mixture of compound sentences, complex sentences ("Instead of being proud of his outstanding accomplishment of placing fourth,



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 4 Essay (continued)

Commentary

Daniel decides to sulk, and give himself up to self-pity. Soon, Daniel loses all hope, and his spirit dies within him"), and compound/complex sentences ("In a way, the speech topic describes Daniel after the call, for after placing fourth in the regionals, Daniel was still full of hope and pride, expecting the unexpected").

The essay is almost free of errors in conventions. It contains one misspelling ("devastated"), a mistaken use of the past tense in paragraph three ("didn't" rather than "doesn't"), and occasional wordiness ("in the way that" instead of "in that"), but otherwise spelling and grammar are sound.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point four.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work

The Alternate Speaker

"Hope is powerful. Without it, you have nothing. With it, you can expect the unexpected to happen to you." In the short story, "The Alternate Speaker," Daniel, the alternate speaker, learned to hope for what is unexpected.

Sometimes, when we have the smallest of chances, we lose hope in ourselves. We not only give up, but we also lose all hope. Daniel, lost hope, when he was announced to be the alternate speaker. He knew that he cannot go to the regional competition, unless someone drops out, which he really doubted. He had the smallest chance, the smallest hope, but when a week passed, and no one called for him to take someone's place, he gave up, and lost hope.

However, we can regain our hope, just as Daniel did on the day of the competition. That morning, he got a call that he needs to take someone's place, because the girl lost her voice. We can regain our hope, if there's someone hoping for us, just as Daniel's mom had the hope of him getting into the regional competition. As the small chances of our dreams grow, so does our hope and belief in ourselves grow. At hard times, all we have to do is be patient and hope for the best. Isn't that all we can do?

After we believe in ourselves and start hoping, the unexpected might happen. At the end of the short story, "The Alternate Speaker," Daniel went to the regional competition, and won fourth place, becoming the alternate speaker again. However, this time, he did not lose hope. He did not wish or hope for someone to become ill, but he hoped that, and he knew that he has a small chance of competing in the state finals. Now he knew, from personal experience, that all he has to do is be patient and hope for the best. And if it all works out, he will be ready to speak for his speech competition, with belief in himself and hope that can grow into a dream, and a dream that can grow into reality.

Now, Daniel learned his lesson. He learned that he can always regain hope, believe in himself, be patient, and just hope. "Hope is powerful. Without it, you have nothing. With it, you can expect the unexpected to happen to you." At the end, Daniel expected the unexpected and learned the lesson of hope. Who knows what might happen to you today or tomorrow? Just hope for the best!

Commentary

This essay addresses all parts of the writing task. It has a beginning that leads effectively into the middle of the essay, a middle that demonstrates the writer's understanding of the story, and an ending that draws a conclusion. The essay demonstrates a general but not clear understanding of purpose and audience and a mostly consistent focus, progressing through a summary of the story and incorporating interpretation into the summary. The essay often drifts, however, from a focus on Daniel's character to a discussion of what the reader can learn ("That morning, he got a call that he needs to take someone's place, because the girl lost her voice. We can regain our hope, if there's someone hoping for us, just as Daniel's mom had the hope of him getting into the regional competition. As the small chances of our dreams grow, so does our hope and belief in ourselves grow").

The interpretation demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of the story by advancing as a central idea the notion that Daniel learns to be patient, to believe in what he can accomplish, and to hope for the unexpected. The writer supports this idea with examples from the story ("At the end of the short story 'The Alternate Speaker,' Daniel went to the regional competition and won fourth place, becoming the alternate speaker again. However, this time, he did not lose hope.... Now he knew, from personal experience, that all he has to do is be patient and hope for the best").

The essay includes a variety of sentence types, including an effective combination of complex and compound/complex sentences ("However, we can regain our hope, just as Daniel did on the day of the competition. That morning, he got a call that he needs to take



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 3 Essay (continued)

Commentary

someone's place, because the girl lost her voice. We can regain our hope, if there's someone hoping for us, just as Daniel's mom had the hope of him getting into the regional competition").

The essay contains some errors in conventions. In several places, for example, the writer misplaces and/or overuses commas ("Daniel, lost hope, when he was announced to be the alternate speaker"). In addition, the writer has not yet mastered use of the present tense to summarize plot. As a result, verb tense frequently switches between past and present ("He knew that he cannot go to the regional competition, unless someone drops out, which he really doubted"). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding, but they do consign this paper to the lower range of score point three.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work

In The Alternate Speaker the main character Daniel is in a speech compation and at the end he places fourth place. When he is leaving he feels angry but it's not just that he placed fourth it's also because he cant go to the regional competition. His parents were proud of him but he was'nt proud of himself. I understand that he felt bad but he should feel good that he tried. When he saw his sister she was joking with him but he still felt bad.

When he was at home the phone rang and one of the contes-tants named Rebecca Peterson lost her voice. She had laryngitis so she could'nt speak. This ment Daniel was going to the regional competition. When he goes he said if he got fourth he would'nt be a sore sport. At the first competition he was and I don't think he should have then.

He still got fourth but he felt good that he even got to go to the regional competition. In the whole story overall the writer showed that if you did bad you should feel good you did it in the first place.

Commentary

This essay addresses only one part of the writing task. It does not, for example, present an interpretation of the story or of Daniel's character supported by examples or details from the story. The writer attempts to present an interpretation in the final paragraph ("In the whole story overall the writer showed that if you did bad you should feel good you did it in the first place") but offers opinions ("At the first competition he was [a sore sport] and I don't think he should have then") rather than evidence to support this interpretation.

The essay generally discusses the story in chronological order but does not have a sound organizational structure. Rather than presenting a clear beginning, middle, and end, the essay includes material in its first and last paragraphs that belongs in the middle of the essay.

The writer suggests a central idea in the first paragraph ("I understand that he felt bad but he should feel good that he tried") and reiterates this idea in the final paragraph, but the writer's interpretation is inaccurate. The story implies not so much that "you should feel good you did it in the first place" as that one should feel good about having done one's best.

The essay contains little variety in sentence types. The first paragraph consists solely of loosely constructed compound sentences. The sentences that follow demonstrate more variety, but whether they're complex, compound, or compound/complex, the sentences tend to ramble.

The essay contains several errors in conventions. None of the many compound or complex sentences contains a comma; there is not a comma, in fact, anywhere in the



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 2 Essay (continued)

Commentary

essay. The writer misuses apostrophes in contractions ("cant"; "was'nt"; "could'nt"; "would'nt"), misspells words ("compatition"; "ment" instead of "meant"), includes mistaken verb tenses ("When he goes he said if he got fourth..."), and capitalizes the story's title but fails to place quotation marks around it.

These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point two.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on March 18 and 19, 2003

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work

Daniel was in a competition and he placed fourth. He was the alternate if someone drops out. He was still mad that he didn't place to go on. Sarah had called Daniel a big mouth. Daniel was working hard on his speech with his parents. The parents tried to encourag him that someone mite drop out. He had given up hope of competing at regionals. Daniel speech teacher had called him to take Rebecca Peterson place. He had promised himself that he wouldn't be a sore loser. They had handet out the speech topics. Danile was relief of his reading topic. The teacher told Danile if want to speak from your personal experience. Later he had walked out with an award. He couldn't want to tell his family.

Commentary

This essay demonstrates no understanding of purpose or audience and little grasp of the text. The writer merely recounts bits of the story, making no attempt to show understanding of the story's meaning or characters. The essay lacks a central idea and, consequently, contains no examples or details that would support a central idea.

The essay contains no interpretation that might provide a focus. It has no organization beyond sequential recounting and, because verb tenses are inaccurate, sometimes erroneously describes events that occurred in the present as having occurred in the past ("Sarah had called Daniel a big mouth. Daniel was working hard on his speech with his parents"). The essay does not have a separate beginning, middle, and end.

Lacking transitions, the essay consists mainly of simple sentences that are choppy and disconnected.

The essay contains serious errors in conventions. Verb tenses often switch almost randomly from past to present ("He was the alternate if someone drops out"). In the middle of the paragraph, verbs slip into the past perfect tense ("He had promised himself that he wouldn't be a sore loser. They had handet out the speech topics"). There are frequent spelling errors ("The parents tried to encourag him that someone mite drop out"), there is a need to add apostrophe "s" in places to indicate the possessive ("Daniel speech teacher had called him to take Rebecca Peterson place"), and a word used as an adjective is not written in the form of an adjective ("Daneil was relief of his reading topic"). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point one.



Grade Seven Response to Literature Writing Task

Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

The writing task below was administered to students who took the Grade Seven California Writing Standards Test on May 13 or 14, 2003. Sample student responses and teacher commentaries are presented on the pages following the task shown below.

Response to Literature Writing Task

Directions:

- Read the story that begins on the following page.
- As you read, you may mark the story or make notes.
- After reading the story, you will be given directions to write an essay. You will have time to read, plan, write, and proofread.
- You may reread or go back to the story at any time during the assessment.
- Only what you write on the lined pages in this booklet will be scored.

Scoring:

Your writing will be scored on how well you write an essay that:

- shows your understanding of the author's message and your insight into the characters and ideas presented in the story;
- is organized around several clear ideas and/or images from the story;
- justifies your interpretation by giving examples and citing evidence from the text; and
- uses correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Read the Following Story:

Mama and the Graduation Present
By Kathryn Forbes

"It is the custom, then," Mama asked, "the giving of gifts when one graduates?"

"My goodness, Mama," I said, "it's practically the most important time in a girl's life—when she graduates."

I had seen a beautiful pink celluloid dresser set at Mr. Schiller's drugstore, and I



set my heart upon it. I dropped hint after hint, until Nels took me aside and reminded me that we did not have money for that sort of thing. Had I forgotten that the Aunts and the hospital must be paid up? That just as soon as Papa was well enough, he must do the Beauchamp job for no pay?

"I don't care," I cried recklessly, "I *must* have a graduation present. Why, Nels, think how I will feel if I don't get any. When the girls ask me—"

Nels got impatient and said he thought I was turning into a spoiled brat. And I retorted that since he was a boy, he naturally couldn't be expected to understand certain things.

When Mama and I were alone one day, she asked me how I would like her silver brooch for a graduation present. Mama thought a lot of that brooch—it had been her mother's.

"Mama," I said reasonably, "what in the world would I want an old brooch for?"

"It would be like a—an heirloom, Katrin. It was your grandmother's."

"No, thank you, Mama."

"I could polish it up, Katrin."

I shook my head. "Look, Mama, a graduation present is something like—well, like that beautiful dresser set in Mr. Schiller's window."

There, now I had told. Surely, with such a hint—

Mama looked worried, but she didn't say anything. Just pinned the silver brooch back on her dress.

I was so sure that Mama would find some way to get me the dresser set, I bragged to the girls as if it were a sure thing.

Graduation night was a flurry of excitement.

And when I got home—there was the pink celluloid dresser set!



Mama and Papa beamed at my delight, but Nels and Christine, I noticed, didn't say anything. I decided that they were jealous, and felt sorry that they would not join me in my joy.

Mama let me sleep late the next morning. When I got down for breakfast, she had already gone downtown to do her shopping.

After my breakfast, Christine and I went upstairs to make the beds. I made her wait while I ran up to my attic to look again at my wonderful present. Dagmar came with me, and when she touched the mirror, I scolded her so hard she started to cry.

Christine came up then and wiped Dagmar's tears and sent her down to Papa. She looked at me for a long time.

"Why do you look at me like that, Christine?"

"What do you care? You got what you wanted, didn't you?" She pointed to the dresser set. "Trash," she said, "cheap trash."

"Don't you *dare* talk about my lovely present like that! You're jealous, that's what. I'll tell Mama on you."

"And while you're telling her," Christine said, "ask her what she did with her silver brooch. The one her very own mother gave her. Ask her that."

I looked at Christine with horror. "What? You mean—Did Mama—?"

Christine walked away.

I grabbed up the dresser set and ran down the stairs to the kitchen. Papa was drinking his second cup of coffee, and Dagmar was playing with her doll in front of the stove. Nels had left.

"Papa, oh, Papa!" I cried. "Did Mama—Christine says—" I started to cry then, and Papa had me sit on his lap.

"There now," he said, and patted my shoulder. "There now."

After my hiccupping and sobbing had stopped, Papa talked to me very seriously. It



was like this, he said. I had wanted the graduation present. Mama had wanted my happiness more than she had wanted the silver brooch. So she traded it to Mr. Schiller for the dresser set.

"But I never wanted her to do that, Papa. If I had known—I would never have let her—"

"It was what Mama wanted to do, Katrin."

"But she *loved* it so. It was all she had of Grandmother's."

"She always meant it for you, Katrin."

I stood up slowly. I knew what I must do.

And all the way up to Mr. Schiller's drugstore, the graduation present in my arms, I thought of how hard it must have been for Mama to ask Mr. Schiller to take the brooch as payment. It was never easy for Mama to talk to strangers.

Mr. Schiller examined the dresser set with care. He didn't know, he said, about taking it back. After all, a bargain was a bargain, and he had been thinking of giving the brooch to his wife for her birthday next month.

Recklessly, I mortgaged my vacation.

If he would take back the dresser set, if he would give me back the brooch, I would come in and work for him every single day, even Saturdays.

"I'll shine the showcases," I begged. "I'll sweep the floor for you."

Mr. Schiller said that would not be necessary. Since I wanted the brooch back so badly, he would call the deal off. But if I was serious about working during vacation, he might be able to use me.

So I walked out of Mr. Schiller's drugstore not only with Mama's brooch, but with a job that started the next morning. I felt very proud. The dresser set suddenly seemed a childish and silly thing.

Excerpt from MAMA'S BANK ACCOUNT, copyright 1943 by Kathryn Forbes and renewed 1971 by Richard E. McLean and Robert M. McLean, reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Inc.

**Writing the Essay:**

Write an essay in which you present your understanding of the characters and the overall meaning of the story. Support your ideas with examples and/or evidence from the text.

Remember that your writing will be scored on how well you write an essay that:

- shows your understanding of the author's message and your insight into the characters and ideas presented in the story;
- is organized around several clear ideas and/or images from the story;
- justifies your interpretation by giving examples and citing evidence from the text; and
- uses correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 4 Essay

Student Work

Most people at some point, seem to confuse their priorities. Everyone forgets what is most important, and this short story reminds us all to see our own selfishness and remember that what we desire at the moment is not necessarily what will matter in the future. Katrin, a girl who is about to graduate, longs for the pink celluloid dresser she sees in a shop window. Sadly, her family cannot afford this extravagant gift. Katrin learns throughout the course of the story a very important lesson represented by a silver brooch.

When Katrin first tells her family her wish for the pink dresser set, Nels, her brother, says she is turning into a selfish brat. Although Katrin cannot see her own faults, everyone else clearly knows she is being spoiled. But her kind, loving mother offers her the silver brooch which was granted to her by Katrin's grandmother. Katrin rejects this gift as she wants nothing but the wonderful dresser her heart is set upon.

To her delight, she does indeed receive her heart's desire on graduation night. But her happiness did not come without a price. Katrin learns from her sister and Papa that "Mama had wanted my happiness more than she had wanted the silver brooch. So she traded it to Mr. Schiller for the dresser set." Horrified, Katrin suddenly sees how selfish she has been. When she declined her mother's brooch she hurt Mama, but Mama had tried to make Katrin happy anyway. Her mother's selflessness contrasts sharply with Katrin's spoiled attitude toward graduation. Katrin says, "I knew what I must do."

Katrin convinces Mr. Schiller to return the dresser set for her grandmother's brooch. She also agrees to come in every day and work for him. Katrin feels proud, and "the dresser set suddenly seemed a childish and silly thing."

Katrin alters drastically from beginning to end. Her selfishness reverses to thoughtfulness when she realizes how special the brooch is to her mother. Her Mama's love helps teach Katrin how to act in a loving, caring way. It is Mama's example of sacrifice for her daughter which helps Katrin turn around and be thoughtful of her mother's wants and needs. In the same way, Katrin also comes to see how her priorities have been so selfishly confused. Katrin's momentary desire for the dresser so new and wonderful, pales in comparison to the silver brooch, so laden with her mother's and grandmother's love, so rich in history of her family. The brooch represent's her mother's selfless act, while the pink dresser set is Katrin's selfish desire. When Katrin exchanges one for the other, she comes to see how truly worthless and silly the dresser is in reality.

Commentary

This essay clearly addresses all parts of the writing task. It presents the writer's understanding of the story's message and characters with a consistent organizational structure, and it provides examples and details to support the writer's interpretation.

The essay's organizational structure consists of an introduction that leads into the middle effectively; a middle that summarizes the story, illustrates the change in Katrin's character, and presents interpretations of the story's meaning and the change in Katrin; and a conclusion that reiterates the writer's interpretation. The writer presents a coherent interpretation of the story's meaning by maintaining a consistent focus on the change in Katrin. The writer uses transitions effectively to link ideas ("Although Katrin cannot see her own faults, everyone else clearly knows she is being spoiled. But her kind, loving mother...").

The essay presents a thoughtful, comprehensive grasp of the text with accurate interpretations supported by specific textual examples and details. The writer presents as a central idea the notion that Katrin matures when she recognizes her own selfishness and learns to appreciate and emulate her mother's selflessness. The writer illustrates the change in Katrin by identifying the points at which Katrin gains insight and grows in maturity in paragraphs two through four. In paragraph five, the writer explains the changes in Katrin and the story's meaning on a more conceptual level. Here, the writer again helps support interpretation with clear references to the story ("The brooch represent's her mother's selfless act, while the pink dresser set is Katrin's selfish desire"). The conclusion clearly presents the essay's central idea ("There comes a time when every person



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 4 Essay (continued)

Student Work

There comes a time when every person must trade their selfishness for selflessness. Only by doing so can they grow up, mature, and see clearly their priorities. By following Mama's loving example of sacrifice, Katrin discovers this. The whole world can follow Mama's example too, and find it on their own.

Commentary

must trade their selfishness for selflessness. Only by doing so can they grow up, mature, and see clearly their priorities. By following Mama's loving example of sacrifice, Katrin discovers this"). The essay's clear organization and a central idea supported by specific textual examples and details demonstrate a clear understanding of purpose and audience.

A variety of compound, complex, and even cumulative sentences move the reader smoothly through the essay ("Katrin's momentary desire for the dresser so new and wonderful, pales in comparison to the silver brooch, so laden with her mother's and grandmother's love, so rich in history of her family. The brooch represent's her mother's selfless act, while the pink dresser set is Katrin's selfish desire. When Katrin exchanges one for the other, she comes to see how truly worthless and silly the dresser is in reality").

Conventions are generally sound. The essay is nearly free of misspellings, quotations are inserted with appropriate punctuation, and, with one exception ("The brooch represent's her..."), possessives are constructed accurately.

The quality of this writer's observations and excellent control of sentences, paragraphs, and overall organization place this essay in the upper range of score point four.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 3 Essay

Student Work

In this story, Katrin, the main character, learns a valuable and powerful lesson. Katrin is graduating soon, and feels that the best present she could get, (since it was an important custom to give graduation gifts), was the "beautiful pink celluloid dresser set." Though her family is short on money, she knows that her mother will find some way to give it to her. Katrin scorns her mother's offer of the family's heirloom silver brooch, still wanting the dresser set.

On graduation night, Katrin gets the dresser set, but at a great price; she finds that her mother sold the brooch to get the dresser set. Katrin knows what she must do. She returns the dresser set in exchange for the brooch.

I felt that Katrin grew up a lot in the story. She was a childish, selfish girl who cared about a material dresser set. But then, she realizes the true value of heirlooms and sacrifice. Katrin reflects on the sacrifice that her mother made for her; trading in an expensive silver brooch that went back generations in exchange for a cheap dresser set. Katrin grows up in the story—she realizes "how hard it must have been for Mama to ask Mr. Schiller to take the brooch as payment." She sees that her mother had wanted Katrin's happiness more than she wanted the silver brooch.

I thought that the author did an excellent job of building the characters and showing their internal and external conflicts. She described Mama's worry when Katrin said she had to have the dresser set, and she showed Katrin's surprise when she found out Mama had sold the brooch to get the dresser set. She made the characters thoughtfully and believably.

This story has several good moral lessons. Respecting one's parents and realizing how much they care for you was a key point, as well as learning how to make sacrifices. Katrin learned her lessons well, and her story was able to teach us as well.

Commentary

The essay addresses all parts of the writing task. It explains the writer's understanding of the meaning of the story and characters, and it supports that understanding with examples and details.

The essay demonstrates a general understanding of purpose and audience, as well as a logical organization. The writer summarizes the story in the first two paragraphs, presents an interpretation of the story's meaning and Katrin's character in the following paragraph, and summarizes the central idea in the final paragraph.

The writer demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of the story, weaving interpretation throughout the third paragraph—the main interpretative paragraph—and supporting it with examples. However, in that same paragraph, the writer makes interpretive claims that lack specific supporting examples and details ("She was a childish, selfish girl..."; "But then, she realizes the true value of heirlooms and sacrifice"). The fourth paragraph also contains claims that require supporting evidence ("She made the characters thoughtfully and believably").

The point of view is mostly consistent. It is clear, for example, that the essay expresses the writer's point of view, but references to the writer as "I," beginning in the third paragraph and continuing through the fourth paragraph, disrupt the essay's structural coherence. Similarly, in some paragraphs, varied sentence structures or transitional devices help achieve paragraph coherence, while in other paragraphs such transitional techniques are lacking. In the first paragraph, for example, the writer employs varied sentence structures to achieve coherence. In the second paragraph, references to either



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 3 Essay (continued)

Commentary

“Katrin” or “she” at the beginning of each clause help link sentences. In the third paragraph, however, nearly all sentences begin with a subject and verb, with only one attempt at a transitional phrase (“But then”) to alleviate the paragraph’s chopiness.

Errors in conventions are rare. There are needless commas before and after the material in parentheses in the first paragraph, a semicolon used incorrectly in the third paragraph, and a needless comma after “But then,” in the third paragraph. Otherwise, the writer uses conventions appropriately. Words are spelled correctly, periods are placed inside ending quotation marks, and the semicolon in the second paragraph is used correctly.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point three.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 2 Essay

Student Work

This is a very interesting story and it has a very good point to it. At first, the girl kind of lied to her mother about that she had to have a graduation present. She didn't really need one, she was just spoiled and wanted one. She saw the dresser set and she whined to get her way. She wasn't thinking about how her mother was going to get it, she didn't care about anyone besides her and the dresser set.

After she got the dresser set, she still didn't care about anyone or who she was hurting, she just cared about the dresser set. It said in the story, "Dagmar came with me, and when she touched the mirror, I scolded her so hard she started to cry." This shows how much Christine loved the dresser and didn't care about anyone else's feelings.

When Dagmar said about mama and the brooch I knew it was all going to come back at Christine. Deep down inside, she knew the brooch was much more important to her mother than the dresser set was to her. I think she did the right thing by going back to the store and trading the dresser set back in for the brooch. She even went as far as asking him if she would work for him even on weekends so she would have the brooch back.

Commentary

This essay addresses only part of the writing task and demonstrates little grasp of the text and little understanding of purpose. It suggests, for example, that the writer understands Katrin's character by noting in the first paragraph that Katrin was spoiled, but it does not demonstrate understanding because it fails to analyze how Katrin changes through the story. Similarly, the essay hints at an understanding of the story's meaning when it notes in the final paragraph that Katrin realizes the brooch is more important to her mother than the celluloid dresser is to Katrin, but it lacks analysis, examples, or details that might demonstrate understanding. The essay shows little understanding of audience as well. The writer says, for example, that the story has a good point but fails to explain what that point is.

Through the first two paragraphs, the organization consists mainly of sequential retelling of events. The final paragraph consists of a somewhat random mixture of the writer's opinions, attempts at interpretation, and description of the plot. The essay suggests a central idea in observing, "[Katrin] did the right thing by going back to the store and trading the dresser set back in for the brooch," but this observation is not developed further.

Until the final paragraph, sentences typically consist of two clauses loosely connected by either a conjunction or comma splice ("She saw the dresser set and she whined to get her way. She wasn't thinking about how her mother was going to get it, she didn't care about anyone besides her and the dresser set"). The third paragraph contains more sentence variety, but connections between sentences are so weak and some references so vague ("She even went as far as asking



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 2 Essay (continued)

Commentary

him if she would work for him..." that the sentences show no more control than those earlier in the essay.

In addition to the numerous comma splices, the essay typically lacks commas between independent clauses ("This is a very interesting story and it has a very good point to it"). The essay also contains instances of awkward wording ("At first, the girl kind of lied to her mother about that she had to have a graduation present"; "When Dagmar said about Mama and the brooch..."). These errors, however, do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point two.



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 1 Essay

Student Work

Mama is giving Katrin a graduation present because it is a custom. Mama says it is an important time when a person graduates. Katrin is wondering what she has gotten but she was reminded that it wouldn't be anything expensive. She was hoping for a pink celluloid dresser that was at Mr. Schillers drugstore. The reason was that the Aunt's and the hospital must be paid up. Papa was needed to be well enough to do the Beauchamp job for no pay. Katrin ask Mama if she could have the dresser set at the drugstore. When it came to graduation night when she got home she saw the pink celluloid dresser from the drugstore. But she saw that nels and Christine looked jealous and she felt sorry for the both of them. Katrin scold at Dagmar and she ran of crying. Christine wanted to know why she looked at her that way. Christine told Katrin that what Mama did with the silver brooch that her very own mom gave to her. Katrin then grabbed the dresser and ran down stairs to Paper. Papa told Katrin that Mama went to the drugstore to trade her very own silver brooch for the pink dresser, Mama did that to see Katrins happiness. Katrin then grabbed the dresser and took it back to the drugstore to get the brooch back. Katrin also started her new job the next morning.

The author wants us to understand the meaning of how to appreciate the things that you get from other people. The author also shows visual pictures about the story in your brain or mind. The characters say important things like, "It is a custom to give a gift to the one who graduates", and "Mama wanted to see you happy."

Commentary

The writer attempts to interpret the meaning of the story in the final paragraph of the essay, but the interpretive statement ("The author wants us to understand the meaning of how to appreciate the things that you get from other people") is too broad to serve as an accurate interpretation of "Mama and the Graduation Present." In the absence of any analysis or explanation, neither the plot summary in the first paragraph nor the quotations in the second paragraph constitute supporting evidence for the writer's interpretation. The writer does not attempt to present an understanding of the story's characters.

The writing demonstrates no understanding of purpose and audience. Rather than presenting an interpretation supported by examples and details, the writer simply retells the story and offers disconnected quotations. Instead of providing an organizational structure, the writer presents a first paragraph that abruptly plunges into a choppy plot summary and a second paragraph that presents a generalization followed by random quotations. The essay contains no focus, partly because the writer offers no central idea around which the essay might cohere.

Nearly all sentences begin with a subject-verb structure and lack transitions that might alleviate the stylistic repetitiveness by cementing connections between sentences.

The writing contains numerous errors in conventions. These include, most commonly, confusion about the use of apostrophes to form possessives ("Mr Schillers drugstore"; "The reason was that the Aunt's and the hospital"; "Mama did that to see Katrins happiness") and confusion about verb tenses ("Katrin ask Mama if..."; Katrin scold at Dagmar..."; "Papa told Katrin that Mama went



Sample Student Work and Teacher Commentaries for Grade Seven Response to Literature Task Administered on May 13 and 14, 2003

Score Point 1 Essay (continued)

Commentary

[rather than 'had gone'] to the drugstore..."). The essay contains occasional misspellings as well. These errors, however, do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

This essay represents writing in the middle range of score point one.



Grade Seven Scoring Rubric

The scoring rubric that follows is used to assign scores to students' written responses on the grade seven writing tests. This rubric includes two sets of criteria. The criteria under "The writing" are adapted from the English-language arts Writing Strategies and Written Conventions of English content standards. These criteria are used to evaluate written responses in all genres for their clarity of purpose, central idea, and organization; their coherence; and their use of supporting evidence, sentence variety, and writing conventions. The criteria under "Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing," "Response to literature writing," "Persuasive writing," and "Summary writing," adapted from the grade seven Writing Applications content standards for these genres, are used to evaluate student writing in the specific genres to which they apply.

On pages III-28 through III-35 in this section, alternate format versions of the grade seven rubric are presented to indicate how all the scoring criteria are applied to student responses in each genre.

4 *The writing—*

- Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task.
- Demonstrates a *clear* understanding of purpose and audience.
- Maintains a *consistent* point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the *effective* use of transitions.
- Includes a *clearly presented* central idea with *relevant* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes a *variety* of sentence types.
- Contains *few, if any, errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do **not** interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—

- Provides a *thoroughly developed* plot line, including major and minor characters and a *definite* setting.
- Includes *appropriate* strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action).

Response to literature writing—

- Develops interpretations that demonstrate a *thoughtful*, comprehensive grasp of the text.
- Organizes *accurate and coherent* interpretations around *clear* ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
- Provides *specific* textual examples and details to support the interpretations.

Persuasive writing—

- *Authoritatively* defends a position with precise and relevant evidence and *convincingly* addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

Summary writing—

- Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and *significant* details.

**3 The writing—**

- Addresses all parts of the writing task.
- Demonstrates a *general* understanding of purpose and audience.
- Maintains a *mostly consistent* point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the *effective* use of some transitions.
- Presents a central idea with *mostly relevant* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes a *variety* of sentence types.
- Contains *some errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do **not** interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—

- Provides an *adequately developed* plot line, including major and minor characters and a *definite* setting.
- Includes *appropriate* strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action).

Response to literature writing—

- Develops interpretations that demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the text.
- Organizes accurate and *reasonably* coherent interpretations around *clear* ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
- Provides textual examples and details to support the interpretations.

Persuasive writing—

- *Generally* defends a position with relevant evidence and addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

Summary writing—

- Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and *significant* details.

2 The writing—

- Addresses *only parts* of the writing task.
- Demonstrates *little* understanding of purpose and audience.
- Maintains an *inconsistent* point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure, which may include *ineffective* or *awkward* transitions that do not unify important ideas.
- *Suggests* a central idea with *limited* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes *little* variety in sentence types.
- Contains *several errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors **may** interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—

- Provides a *minimally developed* plot line, including characters and a setting.
- *Attempts* to use strategies but with *minimal* effectiveness (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action).

Response to literature writing—

- Develops interpretations that demonstrate a *limited* grasp of the text.
- Includes interpretations that *lack* accuracy or coherence as related to ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
- Provides *few, if any*, textual examples and details to support the interpretations.

Persuasive writing—

- Defends a position with *little, if any*, evidence and *may* address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

Summary writing—

- Is characterized by *substantial* copying of key phrases and *minimal* paraphrasing.

1 The writing—

- Addresses *only one part* of the writing task.
- Demonstrates *no* understanding of purpose and audience.
- *Lacks* a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas.
- *Lacks* a central idea but may contain *marginally related* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- Includes *no* sentence variety.
- Contains *serious errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—

- *Lacks* a developed plot line.
- *Fails* to use strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action).

Response to literature writing—

- Demonstrates *little* grasp of the text.
- *Lacks* an interpretation or *may* be a simple retelling of the passage.
- *Lacks* textual examples and details.

Persuasive writing—

- *Fails* to defend a position with *any* evidence and *fails* to address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

Summary writing—

- Is characterized by substantial copying of *indiscriminately selected* phrases or sentences.



Alternate Format Versions of the Grade Seven Scoring Rubric

In the following charts, the grade seven scoring rubric is presented in an alternate format to indicate how all the scoring criteria in the rubric—those derived from the Writing Strategies and Written Conventions standards as well as those derived from the Writing Applications standards—are applied to student responses in each genre.

The column under “Genre” contains the scoring criteria derived from the grade seven Writing Applications standards. The column under “Organization and Focus” contains scoring criteria derived from the subset of Organization and Focus standards within the grade seven Writing Strategies standards. The column under “Sentence Structure” contains the scoring criterion derived from the Sentence Structure standard within the grade six Written and Oral English Language Conventions standards. The column under “Conventions” contains the scoring criteria derived from the subsets of Grammar, Punctuation, Capitalization, and Spelling standards within the grade seven Written and Oral English Language Conventions standards. Although some columns contain more bullets than others, this is not meant to imply that columns with more bullets are more important in the scoring than those with fewer. References to the writing standards from which each scoring criterion is derived are presented in coded form following each criterion for score point four.

Grade Seven Writing Rubric: Fictional or Autobiographical Narrative Writing

Genre	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Provides a thoroughly developed plot line, including major and minor characters and a definite setting. (Gr. 7 WA 2.1 a, b)■ Includes appropriate strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action). (Gr. 7 WA 2.1 c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task.*■ Demonstrates a clear understanding of purpose and audience.**■ Maintains a consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the effective use of transitions. (Gr. 7 WS 1.1)■ Includes a clearly presented central idea with relevant facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes a variety of sentence types. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains few, if any, errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding of the writing. (Gr. 7 WC 1.1; 1.2; 1.4–1.7)

* Since this criterion addresses requirements of the writing test rather than a content standard, it does not include a standards reference.

** This criterion is based on standards for previous grade levels that students must learn in order to write more complex responses required at grade seven.



Genre	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Provides an adequately developed plot line, including major and minor characters and a definite setting.■ Includes appropriate strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses all parts of the writing task.■ Demonstrates a general understanding of purpose and audience.■ Maintains a mostly consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the effective use of some transitions.■ Presents a central idea with mostly relevant facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes a variety of sentence types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains some errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Provides a minimally developed plot line, including characters and a setting.■ Attempts to use strategies but with minimal effectiveness (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses only parts of the writing task.■ Demonstrates little understanding of purpose and audience.■ Maintains an inconsistent point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure, which may include ineffective or awkward transitions that do not unify important ideas.■ Suggests a central idea with limited facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes little variety in sentence types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains several errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Lacks a developed plot line.■ Fails to use strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; narrative action).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses only one part of the writing task.■ Demonstrates no understanding of purpose and audience.■ Lacks a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas.■ Lacks a central idea but may contain marginally related facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes no sentence variety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.



Grade Seven Writing Rubric: Response to Literature Writing

	Genre	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Develops interpretations that demonstrate a thoughtful, comprehensive grasp of the text. (Gr. 7 WA 2.2 a)■ Organizes accurate and coherent interpretations around clear ideas, premises, or images from the literary work. (Gr. 7 WA 2.2 b)■ Provides specific textual examples and details to support the interpretations. (Gr. 7 WA 2.2 c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task.*■ Demonstrates a clear understanding of purpose and audience.**■ Maintains a consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the effective use of transitions. (Gr. 7 WS 1.1)■ Includes a clearly presented central idea with relevant facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes a variety of sentence types. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains few, if any, errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing. (Gr. 7 WC 1.1; 1.2; 1.4–1.7)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Develops interpretations that demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the text.■ Organizes accurate and reasonably coherent interpretations around clear ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.■ Provides textual examples and details to support the interpretations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses all parts of the writing task.■ Demonstrates a general understanding of purpose and audience.■ Maintains a mostly consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the effective use of some transitions.■ Presents a central idea with mostly relevant facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes a variety of sentence types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains some errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Develops interpretations that demonstrate a limited grasp of the text.■ Includes interpretations that lack accuracy or coherence as related to ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.■ Provides few, if any, textual examples and details to support the interpretations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses only parts of the writing task.■ Demonstrates little understanding of purpose and audience.■ Maintains an inconsistent point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure, which may include ineffective or awkward transitions that do not unify important ideas.■ Suggests a central idea with limited facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes little variety in sentence types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains several errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

* Since this criterion addresses requirements of the writing test rather than a content standard, it does not include a standards reference.

** This criterion is based on standards for previous grade levels that students must learn in order to write more complex responses required at grade seven.

WA: Writing Applications standards

WS: Writing Strategies standards

WC: Written Conventions standards



	Genre	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Demonstrates little grasp of the text.■ Lacks an interpretation or may be a simple retelling of the passage.■ Lacks textual examples and details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses only one part of the writing task.■ Demonstrates no understanding of purpose and audience.■ Lacks a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas.■ Lacks a central idea but may contain marginally related facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes no sentence variety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.



Grade Seven Writing Rubric: Persuasive Writing

	Genre	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
4	■ Authoritatively defends a position with precise and relevant evidence and convincingly addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations. (Gr. 7 WA 2.4 a, b, c)	■ Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task.* ■ Demonstrates a clear understanding of purpose and audience.** ■ Maintains a consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the effective use of transitions. (Gr. 7 WS 1.1) ■ Includes a clearly presented central idea with relevant facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2)	■ Includes a variety of sentence types. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1)	■ Contains few, if any, errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing. (Gr. 7 WC 1.1; 1.2; 1.4–1.7)
3	■ Generally defends a position with relevant evidence and addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.	■ Addresses all parts of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates a general understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains a mostly consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the effective use of some transitions. ■ Presents a central idea with mostly relevant facts, details, and/or explanations.	■ Includes a variety of sentence types.	■ Contains some errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
2	■ Defends a position with little, if any, evidence and may address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.	■ Addresses only parts of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates little understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains an inconsistent point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure, which may include ineffective or awkward transitions that do not unify important ideas. ■ Suggests a central idea with limited facts, details, and/or explanations.	■ Includes little variety in sentence types.	■ Contains several errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

* Since this criterion addresses requirements of the writing test rather than a content standard, it does not include a standards reference.

** This criterion is based on standards for previous grade levels that students must learn in order to write more complex responses required at grade seven.



<i>Genre</i>	<i>Organization and Focus</i>	<i>Sentence Structure</i>	<i>Conventions</i>
1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Fails to defend a position with any evidence and fails to address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses only one part of the writing task.■ Demonstrates no understanding of purpose and audience.■ Lacks a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas.■ Lacks a central idea but may contain marginally related facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes no sentence variety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.



Grade Seven Writing Rubric: Summary Writing

Genre	Organization and Focus	Sentence Structure	Conventions
4 ■ Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and significant details. (Gr. 7 WA 2.5 a, b, c)	■ Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task.* ■ Demonstrates a clear understanding of purpose and audience.** ■ Maintains a consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the effective use of transitions. (Gr. 7 WS 1.1) ■ Includes a clearly presented central idea with relevant facts, details, and/or explanations. (Gr. 7 WS 1.2)	■ Includes a variety of sentence types. (Gr. 6 WC 1.1)	■ Contains few, if any, errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing. (Gr. 7 WC 1.1; 1.2; 1.4–1.7)
3 ■ Is characterized by paraphrasing of the main idea(s) and significant details.	■ Addresses all parts of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates a general understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains a mostly consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the effective use of some transitions. ■ Presents a central idea with mostly relevant facts, details, and/or explanations.	■ Includes a variety of sentence types.	■ Contains some errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
2 ■ Is characterized by substantial copying of key phrases and minimal paraphrasing.	■ Addresses only parts of the writing task. ■ Demonstrates little understanding of purpose and audience. ■ Maintains an inconsistent point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure, which may include ineffective or awkward transitions that do not unify important ideas. ■ Suggests a central idea with limited facts, details, and/or explanations.	■ Includes little variety in sentence types.	■ Contains several errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

* Since this criterion addresses requirements of the writing test rather than a content standard, it does not include a standards reference.

** This criterion is based on standards for previous grade levels that students must learn in order to write more complex responses required at grade seven.



<i>Genre</i>	<i>Organization and Focus</i>	<i>Sentence Structure</i>	<i>Conventions</i>
1 ■ Is characterized by substantial copying of indiscriminately selected phrases or sentences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Addresses only one part of the writing task.■ Demonstrates no understanding of purpose and audience.■ Lacks a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas.■ Lacks a central idea but may contain marginally related facts, details, and/or explanations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Includes no sentence variety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.